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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

Monterey, California



THE DIBB REPORT: THREE YEARS AFTER

By

JOHN M. KENNY

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MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

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| <p>This report describes the political environment which spurred Australia to revise its national strategy and commission the Dobb Review. Paul Dobb's strategic logic and proposed changes for the Australian Defense Force are outlined. The views of his strongest critics are provided. The three year progress of the reorganization of the Australian Defense Force is detailed and includes comment of the major political and economic obstacles delaying some of Dobb's proposed changes.</p> <p>Based on the overall success of Australia's Dobb Report and the inability of U.S. military and political bodies to revise the national strategy, this report argues that the most important lesson to be learned from Australia's experience is the use of a carefully chosen, independent commission tasked to review and revise the national strategy.</p> <p>Additional sponsors are: OSD Competitive Strategies Office, OSD Strategic Planning Branch, and the National Security Council Staff.</p> | | | | | |
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THE DIBB REPORT: THREE YEARS AFTER

by

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INTRODUCTION

An endless debate rages over the effectiveness and efficiency of the Department of Defense. Despite several important studies, such as the Packard Commission's and numerous internal improvements made by the Department of Defense, critics complain that more needs to be done and that it is impossible to create the inertia needed to move such a massive organization. There are even those who claim that, if significant change are to be made, the very structure of the organization must be altered.

Without reciting the long and pessimistic list of "what is wrong with the Department of Defense" touted by legions of Pentagon bashers ensconced in their academic and think tank self-admiration societies, there are problems which require correction and there is a need for better strategic management. What can be done about these problems? Has anyone had similar problems and if so what did they do about it? Did they ultimately improve the situation as they originally intended? Despite George Santayana's popular prediction, we are not doomed to repeat history.

One staunch ally, Australia, recently examined its national strategy and force structure and is making significant organizational changes. Not surprisingly, some Australian problems are similar to those faced by the United States. Although Australia's problems may be quantitatively smaller, we may learn something from their experience.

BACKGROUND

Similarities between the United States and Australia are boundless. Two hundred years ago, both were small isolated colonies populated by outcasts with strong ties to the British empire. We struggled to conquer a large land mass with notable success. Whereas the United States ended its love affair with Mother England rather suddenly and forcefully, Australia nurtured its relationship. Yet even at these early stages, the kinship between the United States and Australia was strong as attested by frequent statements of the first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton. Although located in the South Pacific, Australia was and is today western in outlook, traditions and values.

To strengthen its relationship with Great Britain, Australia adopted the "forward defense" doctrine. They were

an adjunct of Britain and the Empire's opponents were their opponents. The theory followed that, if Australia were ever threatened, Britain would rush to its rescue.

Australians, to their credit, supported this doctrine vigorously and fought bravely alongside the British in the Maori Wars in New Zealand, Sudan in 1885, the Boer War in 1899, the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900, and during both World Wars. They provided support at great financial and personal sacrifice. During World War I, they lost 59,000 soldiers, or 1% of the entire population. They lost another 22,000 soldiers in World War II.

Britain's loss of Singapore at the onset of World War II signaled a major change in British and Australian relations. Britain, although reluctant to recognize their undignified downward slide from the ranks of first rate world powers, was absorbing world wide defeats in those early days. It was obvious to the Australians that if Britain could not defend itself, it would be unable to aid Australia. This disappointing revelation arrived at an inopportune time, as the aggressive Japanese continued their frightening sweep southward. In a pragmatic move motivated by the hot breath of Japan's Imperial Army and Navy, Australia turned to the United States for protection.

Australia provided its military resources to General MacArthur, who conducted Australia's war effort largely free from Australian political direction, as an extension of the U.S. war effort.

The end of World War II caused no changes in Australia's "forward defense" doctrine, with one exception: the United States had replaced Great Britain as its protector. Australia posited that, unable to defend itself, a major power was needed to provide that protection. Australia assisted the United States during the Berlin Airlift, fought in the Korean War, and in Vietnam. Australia, South Korea and New Zealand were our only allies to provide help during Vietnam. None of the United States' European allies offered assistance.

Although Australia cooperated with Great Britain, the withdrawal of British forces deployed west of the Suez Canal and out of Malaysia and Singapore left the United States the only super power in the region. One might debate whether Britain was a super power, but for Australia comparison shopping was not an available luxury. For their "forward defense" concept to remain viable, it was the United States or nothing.

In July 1969, President Nixon rocked Australia's "forward defense" concept. On his return from a visit to Southeast Asia, he made a brief stop in Guam and announced that the United States would honor all treaties to which it was a party but that our allies were expected to provide for their own defense. Nixon's Guam Doctrine torpedoed the basic premise on which the Australian defense doctrine was based. ASEAN countries took the Nixon doctrine seriously and prepared for their own defense. It was time for Australia to scrap the outdated doctrine and develop a new one.

THE REASSESSMENT

Australia heeded Dirty Harry Callahan's exhortation, "a man has got to know his limitations," and began the difficult task of defining its limitations. Australia made a serious and meticulous examination of its capabilities. Could Australia defend itself? Against whom?

Australian strategists began to develop a new defense policy based on key concepts. Australia was a regional power in a remote part of the world, with no known enemies. Australia's location gave it the unique advantage of a long

warning prior to any buildup or attack by neighbors. Its neighbors were third world powers with no expansionistic plans. Perhaps the most difficult concept to endorse was that Australia could no longer rely on the military assistance of her allies in "all" circumstances.

The latter concept is one which most nations find difficult to define. The United States deals constantly with the disappointments imposed by its allies. The United States has been virtually blackmailed by allies who attempt to increase exponentially the costs of basing agreements. Our allies have sold crucial defense technology to the Soviets, provided Libya, Iraq and Syria with the technology and supplies to make chemical weapons, and refused to extradite known terrorists to the United States for prosecution. The concept gels: allies support each other when there is something to be gained (or at least not lost) by all parties concerned.

Australia's major shift in strategic thought precipitated a concomitant review of the force structure. They began the planning to revamp their military configuration as an adjunct of a larger force, and to develop a force capable of dealing with regional conflicts of varying scales while also covering extensive

territories. During this transition and reevaluation, the Australians suffered from some of the same problems that plague any organization undergoing strategic restructuring. This resulted in differing opinions on every aspect of the problem, with no consensus.

In February 1985, noted strategist Paul Dibb was tasked by the Australian Minister for Defense, Kim Beazley, to examine the current capabilities of the Australian Defense Force. He was further directed to describe the current strategic environment, develop Australia's strategy, establish defense priorities for Australia, and, finally, to define the force structure needed to meet those priorities. It was a monster project and he was given one year to complete his review. He published his findings in March 1986, a compilation of strategic and force planning concepts under a single cover.¹

He based his planning on the following strategic environmental and Australian assumptions:

- *Australia has no identifiable direct military threat.
- *All significant states in the area observe the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and entertain no motive to acquire a nuclear capability .

*Any massive change in this benign environment would take at least ten years and could not occur unnoticed.

*Global war between the super powers is highly unlikely. There is no contingency plan to use the Australian Defense Force in the unlikely event of nuclear war.

*Only the United States and the Soviets have the capability to launch an invasion of Australia.

*Australia cannot be blockaded. There is no concern with SLOC vulnerability or loss of import/export trade.

*Australia is practically self sufficient in most food, raw materials and energy resources.

Next, he defined the objectives of the Australian Defense Force. He determined that this force must be able to exercise complete control over the land, territorial seas and airspace, protect Australia's resource zones, and defend its maritime approaches. This is an immense assignment for a small population with a limited industrial base and defense capabilities. The Australian Defense Force is responsible for controlling an area which includes 10% of the earth's surface, stretching 4000 miles east to west and 3000 miles north to south.

Although that is a large area to cover with a limited force, Australia faces no major enemy and the only likely area for an attack is in the remote and inhospitable north. Other than the United States and the Soviet Union, no nation is capable of mounting an amphibious assault and waging a conventional war. No nation in the region has either the capacity or motive to provoke, much less attack and attempt to conquer, Australia. Australia is an industrialized western power, which would seem conducive to a fairly comfortable situation.

In reality, it is a rather difficult situation. Once the easily defineable conventional warfare scenarios have been eliminated, Australia must cope with unconventional low intensity conflicts; a predicament which is difficult to anticipate or control. The complexities the United States faced in Beirut and the Israeli/Palestinian conflict are analogies of difficult low intensity conflicts. Dobb simplified Australia's problem somewhat. He determined the one sure way not to manage these situations is with "deterrence". In low intensity conflicts, deterrence relies too much on the enemy's perception and values. It must be assumed that the enemy will react sanely and holds values over which you exercise some control; yet history has proven that to be an insane assumption when dealing with

terrorists and other extremists. Nor does deterrence eliminate the need for a defensive force.

The next complication is that low intensity conflicts can occur with little or no warning, and with varying degrees of intensity. Nevertheless, Dobb succinctly said that, regardless of the speed or intensity of a low intensity conflict, Australia's defensive posture will remain the same and he called it a "strategy of denial".

THE STRATEGY OF DENIAL

The "strategy of denial" takes advantage of Australia's remoteness and the hostile northern geography. It is a strategy to deny any military operations in the sea and air gap surrounding Australia, including preventing any successful landing, and, when necessary, the defeat of any landing force. The strategy presents a layered defense of four interlocking barriers:

*First. A comprehensive intelligence and surveillance capability exists, which minimizes the chances of a surprise attack.

*Second. The Australian air and naval forces can control the sea and air gap, the offshore area surrounding Australia.

*Third. Defensive capabilities can deny enemy operations in the focal areas and shipping lanes.

*Fourth. Highly mobile and dispersed ground forces can deny the enemy access to vital population centers and military infrastructure.

Dibb pointed out that this strategy is non-expansionistic, hence peaceful. It also conforms to the Nixon (Guam) doctrine, the catalyst which triggered this new "strategy of denial".

Having laid out the strategic environment, and the Australian Defense Force's responsibilities and objectives, Dibb next determined the force structure requirements that would enable Australia to enforce the "strategy of denial". He reasoned that this force must fulfill all peacetime obligations, maintain an independent military capability and provide a base for expansion should there be an increase in tensions. The force would be maintained at varying levels of readiness: at a high level for counterterrorist actions and low intensity conflicts, medium level for preemptive

strikes and low intensity conflicts in the sea and air gap, and at a low level for larger conflicts. While desirable for the force to be allied standardized, interoperability among the Australian single services is an absolute necessity.

THE INTELLIGENCE AND SURVEILLANCE FORCE

The intelligence and surveillance capability is the keystone of the "strategy of denial". It must be infallible in projecting any long range military buildups by Australia's neighbors, and ensuring against a surprise attack. This provides Australia with a military advantage. It requires a careful allocation of assets between current intelligence, strategic warning and regional intelligence data base maintenance. A combination of over-the-horizon radar, long range maritime patrol aircraft and naval ships is required to maintain surveillance out to 1500 nautical miles from the northern coast. Keeping in mind the important role the intelligence and surveillance forces would play as part of the "strategy of denial", Dibb, amazingly, found that the current force level needed few changes.

He envisaged a force structure for intelligence and surveillance that included a modest investment in new technologies, an upgrade of the electronic warfare system to include adaptation to credible low intensity conflicts and the establishment of a regional electronic warfare data base. Project Jindalee, the OTH radar, was to progress from the experimental to an operational stage and two additional radars were required operational by the mid 1990s.

Australia's long range maritime patrol assets are twenty P3C Orion aircraft and Dibb deemed them sufficient to support the surveillance mission. Dibb found that Australia could not detect submarines and he recommended the priority development and evaluation of surface towed array sonar systems, similar to the U.S. T-AGOS.

He recommended a massive upgrade and acceleration of Australia's mapping and charting capabilities to include the use of civilian contracts and acquisition of the latest laser mapping and hydrographic equipment. Dibb decided that, while one of Australia's defense assets was the ruggedness and inaccessibility of its north coast, the lack of accurate mapping and charting of the area severely hindered Australia's ability to defend it. He recommended

that the mapping and charting surveys be completed within 15 years.

He urged the budget gradually increase to account for maintaining current technology as well as investing in new technology. He believed that the coordination of intelligence should be concentrated at the Headquarters of the Australian Defense Force.

The over-the-horizon radar, while excellent for long range detection of aircraft, required more testing in its surface craft detection capability. As Dibb repeatedly pointed out, the most likely direction for any threat was from the north. Therefore, there was a need for three over-the-horizon radars to protect Australia's northern flank. Ultimately, they would need five radars. He also noted that the true capabilities of the radar were not known as it was in the test phase. Once the radar's ability to pinpoint targets was established, the need for AEW aircraft or other systems to direct strike and interdiction aircraft to targets could also be determined. The over-the-horizon radar at Jindalee met all expectations and Australia plans to build several more. The radar system worked so well that Australian scientists claimed, much to the chagrin of the

United States Air Force, that their radar can track the Stealth aircraft.²

The transition to combat intelligence should be relatively simple, redirecting existing assets and introducing reserve intelligence units.

The intelligence and surveillance system relies heavily on access to United States intelligence information. This agreement was in exchange for United States basing rights for intelligence and communications stations; a mutually beneficial arrangement. The modern technology has made reality of the seemingly impossible task of keeping tabs on such an immense area.

STRIKE AND INTERDICTION

After establishing a sound intelligence and surveillance system, the next step is to build the capability to defend against an enemy before any uninvited arrival on the homeland. Again, Australia has unique geographic advantages. There are only two ways to attack Australia, by air or sea. These two realms are excellent areas to counter any attack (assuming that you have detected and identified the attacking forces and their intentions).

Australia requires a strike/interdiction force capable of offensive action, when necessary, in the sea and air gap surrounding the country. Having capable forces to conduct that mission lets any predisposed enemies know that Australia can maintain sovereignty over its territory and that, if pressed, will use force to protect its interests. Although not the primary intent, a strike and interdiction capability may also deter regional nations with expansionist tendencies.

Using the sea and air gap as the first line of military overt actions assures there is little fear of harming innocent bystanders. By limiting strikes to military targets, possible escalation from destruction of unintended targets (such as the civilian populace) is reduced. Once a low intensity conflict involves the populace then sentiment, revenge, and machismo emerge. The ease with which a lesser developed country can obtain and effectively use high tech weapons makes revenge a devastating option. Therefore, the Australian strike/interdiction force is primarily oriented towards conducting battle in the sea and air gap.

Attacking enemy land bases is a dual edged sword. It is possible that the conflict will be ended sooner, but there is also the great probability of escalating the conflict and

straining the long term relationship with a neighbor. The intent of the strike and interdiction forces is to prevent land attack and, failing that, to discourage escalation. These forces must be carefully controlled, with reliance on the timeliness and accuracy of information provided by intelligence.

Considering those responsibilities and limitations, Dobb determined that the force structure of the strike and interdiction forces would be limited by the following parameters. During a low intensity conflict, surface ships could police the gap against small, poorly defended surface craft. Combatant ships are ideal because of their endurance, good communications and surveillance capabilities, and ability to arrest trespassers before any conflict can escalate to armed response by either side. This task does not require sophisticated gear. If the enemy has an anti-ship missile capability, then aircraft and submarines are better choices.

There is no need to maintain a strike and interdiction capability beyond 1000 nautical miles, which is the limit of Australia's direct military interest. There is no need for maritime operations in the western Indian Ocean or the northern Pacific. Should a low intensity conflict escalate,

these boundaries would not change. The objective would remain to intercept intruders in the sea and air gap within the 1000 nautical mile limit with a prudent mix of surface combatants, submarines and aircraft.

Dibb proposed that the strike force comprise two land based squadrons of F-111s and F/A-18s, and six submarines. The F-111 aircraft required an update and overhaul. The update could scale the spectrum from a minimal approach, leaving the aircraft with basically the same offensive capabilities, to the other extreme and, at great expense, enhance the capability of the aircraft to the state-of-the-art. Dibb did not consider the expensive update necessary because of the expected low tech threat. He believed the F-111 was too powerful for the strike and interdiction role. He recommended instead that the aircraft undergo a minimal update and that Australia acquire 25 additional F/A-18 aircraft.

Six submarines were believed sufficient. At the end of the service life of the Oberon submarines, he recommended replacement by six new submarines. So that the submarine force could be separated and supported, he also recommended that an additional submarine base be established .

MARITIME DEFENSE

The maritime defense of Australia is an extension of the strike and interdiction force concepts. Should a battle be fought, the sea is an excellent place to conduct it. With heavy reliance on the timeliness and accuracy of intelligence, a strong maritime defense force is mandatory for a remote island nation which plans to engage any enemy in the sea and air gap.

The probability of a major maritime power attacking Australia is remote and was not a planning consideration. Because of Australia's vast coastline, it is costly to sustain surface forces capable of rapidly responding to a maritime low intensity conflict. The northern territories are remote and susceptible to an enemy with even modest attack capabilities. Escalation beyond a low intensity conflict would likely result from an error in judgement and the excessive use of force. Dibb noted that there was a limited probability of any large scale maritime buildup in the region and, therefore, no need to concentrate on shipborne ASW and air defense capabilities. Should there be changes in the regional situation, there would be sufficient time to change Australia's force structure.

Protection of shipping would be a mission of the Australian Defense Force. Interdiction of Australian shipping is a practical option for almost any enemy. With the exception of the northern approaches, an area too shallow for submarine operations, submarines would most likely attack Australian shipping. Dibb added that Australia does not rely on coastal shipping to support military operations, and the best defense against shipping attacks would be rerouting the ships. Geography once again favors Australia which, for practical purposes, is impossible to blockade. While the likelihood of a mid ocean threat is low, and could be defeated by rerouting, there might be occasions when rerouting would not be prudent and Australia must be able to protect the focal areas of Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong, Bass Strait, and the area near Cape Leeuwin. Only in extreme cases would escort of convoys be considered.

To protect those focal areas from submarine attack, Dibb suggested novel ASW operations using towed array sonar systems teamed with long range maritime patrol aircraft to localize and attack submarine contacts. Land based ASW helicopters would provide backup as might some ASW helicopters stationed on non-military ships. He felt the shipborne ASW systems were too costly, the ships too

vulnerable to submarine attack, and that a combination of ASW helos, LRMP and towed array ships could do the job.

Dibb was well aware of Australia's vulnerability to mining attacks especially in the northern approaches. The mine countermeasure forces were inadequate, unable to cope with the threat, and needed upgrading. Training should reflect the very short warning time within which an adversary could mount an effective mining effort. MCM involves very complex skills, and Dibb felt that Australia needed the capability to clear mines in three dispersed areas simultaneously.

Yet he saw no urgent need to maintain proficiency with defensive and offensive mining, while admitting that it would not hurt to have a small inventory of mines to maintain a skill level to facilitate expansion if it was required.

Dibb specified how money should be allocated to development the MCM force by accelerating funding to provide testing and evaluation of two prototype inshore minehunting catamarans (MHI) and if the tests succeed, to construct four more MHIs. Should the concept fail, urgently acquire three minesweeps from overseas. He also urged that Australian concepts on minesweeping be vigorously pursued. Finally, he

recommended a Mine Warfare Center, located in Sydney, since its harbor would be the most likely target of hostile mining.

Dibb's view of Australia's maritime air defense is straight forward and logical. It will be provided by land based fighters. While ships are invaluable and provide important presence, endurance, communications and surveillance during a low intensity conflict, he also pointed out that these roles do not require any air defense capability. Ships are too vulnerable and valuable to subject them to an environment where they require an air defense system. His summation was that Australia will maintain air superiority in the northern approaches with land based fighter aircraft.

A small surface force is necessary to carry out the maritime defense mission. In low intensity conflicts, Dibb determined that the proper mix of surface forces would be ten patrol boats, eight light patrol frigates (this class of ship is in the development stage), and eight or nine destroyers. Those ships can maintain a naval presence in the five areas of Dampier Sound, Timor Sea, Arafura Sea, Torres Strait, Christmas Island, and the Indian Ocean approaches, and yet provide adequate factors of transit

time, maintenance and upkeep periods and normal rotation and training. The Navy would also require six Squirrel light helos, nine Sea Kings, sixteen Seahawks, and twelve reconnaissance helos to support the maritime mission.

While he tended to downplay the importance of high tech weapon systems to combat low intensity conflicts, he acknowledged the need to maintain an expansion base on which to grow in case of significant conflict escalation. The high capability destroyers provide a skill base for expansion.

The ability to operate for long periods without support is an inherent advantage that the Navy enjoys and maintains. Construction of a modest naval base in the northwest would enhance this capability, as would the purchase of a cheap tanker. The Navy must be able to refuel and rearm at sea, and needs a 6000 to 7000 ton replenishment ship. Dibb also urged a further study for a tender to provide alternative repair and support facilities to deployed elements of the fleet. This tender would enable the Navy to support prolonged operations in two remote area simultaneously. Dibb suggested the main submarine base be moved to the west coast, which would better support northern area patrols. He

also believed that the major fleet concentration be in Jervis Bay.

The Naval reserves (seven percent of the total service force) required only minor adjustments. Since the Naval reserves are used primarily in Naval Control of Shipping and Naval Intelligence, he doubted the merit of tasking the reserves with the entire MCM mission. He encouraged a core of permanent naval manpower using reservists to support the MCM mission.

CONTINENTAL AIR DEFENSE

Should the enemy penetrate the sea and air gap, the next line of defense is the continental air force, with and in support of the ground forces. A busy multi-talented force, the continental air force provides maritime air defense as well as strike and interdiction.

Again, Dibb relied on logic to determine where an adversary would be most likely to attack. He would likely attack the most remote, lightly defended area. The enemy would be attempting to make a political statement rather than seeking any real military advantage. He might attempt to insert paratroopers. Still, the mission of Australia's

continental air defense would be to locate the enemy and intercept him with a high probability of success.

Australia's remote location again proffers a strategic benefit. Based on regional capabilities and geographic position, Dibb concluded that there was no need for many aircraft. He found a need for three air defense squadrons, located in Learmont-Derby, Darwin-Tindall and Cape York. To support three squadrons would require 75 F/A-18 aircraft; 16 per squadron, 13 for attrition, 12 in a operational conversion unit, and two in a research and development unit.

Dibbs further asserted that a ground based radar system be acquired and installed to cover the approaches to Darwin and Tindall, but saw no need to increase the ground based surface-to-air missile systems.

He voiced a need for two mobile radar systems to support two fighter bases but delayed making any decision on the need for AEW aircraft until all the OTHR testing was completed. He identified the need for additional air-to-air refueling assets and recommended the conversion of an additional four B707s to bring the total of inflight refueling-capable B707 aircraft to eight.

He found that the Air Force reserve program required some expansion in aircrews, maintenance crews and airfield defense units.

CONTINENTAL GROUND DEFENSE

The ground defense of Australia is a complex issue. The fear of land attack by Japan during World War II has never been forgotten. The Army force structure has traditionally been based on defending Australia from large scale invasion. Dobb's approach was radically different. He averred that the capture of the mainland is not a planning contingency. Regional countries have neither the desire nor capability to wage a conventional war. Dobb believed the most likely threat to be low intensity conflict. While he concurred that a low intensity conflict could escalate by increased conflicts or increased intensity of raids and might even involve higher fire power, the escalation is well below the conventional warfare level. Thus, basing the force structure of the Army on the remote possibility of a conventional attack is expensive and unseemly.

If the only remote possibility of attack is a low intensity conflict, then the argument could be pursued that there is little need for an army. What is needed is some beefed-up police force specifically designed to handle terrorist threats.

Dibb chose a middle ground. While it would take ten years for any of Australia's neighbors to develop the capacity to attack Australia, and that buildup would be noticed, and while there was no evidence that anyone intends to develop or use that capability, he recognized the pervasive fear that a major assault could occur. Inferior intelligence, the defeat of the maritime and strike forces, or the government's tendency to act slowly add fuel to this particular fear. Therefore, he thoughtfully envisioned an Army capable of coping with counter-terrorist operations as well as providing for base expansion in the unlikely event that Australia is threatened by organized military forces.

These ground forces must have excellent communications, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, and light but adequate firepower. The most important characteristic of this force must be high mobility, including helicopters and paratroopers. Finally, this force should require minimal logistic support for short duration engagements. When sited

at suitable strategic locations throughout the mainland, the ground force would be prepared to counter small raids covering large areas.

Since an enemy might insert a small ground force without any warning, Australia's ground force must be able to immediately perform four missions. They must protect Australia's air and maritime assets; defend the civilian population and key locations in northern Australia; provide an offensive capability to contain incursions and defeat enemy forces close to their landing areas; and contain limited skills and expansion capability to fight a conventional land battle, even though a remote probability.

Dibb believed the present number in the Army was correct, but that the training, organization, and equipment was lacking. There are six regular battalions. He felt that the highly mobile Australian Operational Defense Force was the correct organization structure for most of the Army, and this concept should be studied and developed. Although he recognized the need for an expansion base and the maintenance of certain critical skills, he saw no need for the Sixth Battalion to be organized, equipped and trained for conventional warfare and amphibious operations.

He opined that the Army should be light, fast and mobile but was over-mechanized. He recommended a reduction of light armoured fighting vehicles from the 630 on hand to somewhere between 450 to 500, a number he considered adequate. He recommended tanks be reduced from 103 to 50, and the excess mechanized equipment be turned over to reserve forces. He remarked that the acquisition of 66 pieces of field artillery for the reserves was excessive and said 46 pieces would be adequate. There was no priority need for fixed wing close air support and a very low need for medium range artillery pieces.

What the Army needed was an increase in regional ground surveillance forces and two companies of tactical helos which would require acquisition of an additional 36 aircraft.

The high mobility of the ground force depends on air transport. Dibb wanted the 22 Caribou and 12 Hercules aircraft replaced by 20 new Hercules type aircraft. He also acknowledged that amphibious insertions were unlikely and that there was no need to maintain an amphibious force other than a bare bones unit for an expansion base. He did not recommend replacement of any amphibious craft.

Although it appears that ground transport is adequate, a prolonged engagement would probably require an increased

airlift capability. Should the need arise, Dibb noted that Australia could use commercial air assets. The Army also needs to start training in the northern area and he suggested the acquisition of a training area in western New South Wales.

If Australia's north was the most likely place for an attack, then it must be made more defensible and a less likely target. Dibb agreed that a regular infantry battalion should be based in the Darwin-Tindall area.

The Army reserves, which represent 44% of the total force, required the most reformation. Dibb identified the largest single problem, one which the Army was working diligently to correct, as the change to the total force concept which would include the integration and affiliation of reserve units with the regular Army. The reserve force would fill in for the regular Army when deployed to low intensity hot spots, requiring reservists to assume the security of key installations.

Although the number of personnel involved was unchanged, Dibb's recommendations had profound effects on the remaining aspects of the Army. Fewer big guns, fewer tanks, fewer armoured fighting vehicles. Dibb was recommending a low tech, unglamorous Army. By not having to

operate and support all that high tech gear, he was making it easier to "be all that you could be". The mission now called for a lightly armed, highly mobile force which could be supported for extended periods in remote locations.

COMMAND AND CONTROL

Dibb was also directed to study the effectiveness of the command and control structure of the Australian Defense Force. He found the command and control structure somewhat antiquated, and recommended that the shift to a joint command structure continue. He acknowledged the single service arrangement as appropriate to peacetime training and support needs, but the short lead times encountered in low intensity conflicts demanded the establishment of a joint command force, including a new generation computer based command and control system for the chief of the defense force.

Since the north is the most likely location for an attack, it needs an embryonic joint headquarters designed to handle low intensity conflicts. Finding no need for immediate change, the conversion to a joint force could be

done with minimal resource and manpower implications and should reduce interservice rivalries.

Australia needs updated, reliable communications. Dibb concurred with the proposed increased use of satellite communication (AUSSAT), but recommended the retention of HF as back up.

The Dibb Review pointed out the paucity of planning for any low intensity conflict. The latest planning document was the War Book, designed for national mobilization and last updated in 1956. He identified three areas to be included in the planning to cope with the current strategic environment. These are wartime administration, military expansion as a result of an escalating conflict, and the establishment of war reserve and stockpiling criteria.

Dibb, again noting no imminent threats, wrote that no major adjustment to the government structure would be necessary in the event of a low intensity conflict. What is needed are general guidelines to highlight potential defense requirements. Examples of these guidelines are:

- military force would be used against external military threats.

- the Federal and State governments remain responsible for government and civil administration.

-there is a need to streamline some (not all) administrative procedures to assist defense.

-internal security and law would remain a civil responsibility.

General guidelines are all that are needed now and they should be designed to handle low intensity conflicts as opposed to national mobilization to defeat an invasion force.

Dibb identified a planning requirement for civil sector augmentation, specifically the coordination of civil maritime and air resources. This planning is of a general nature, but had been poorly done on a piecemeal basis.

LOGISTICS

"The move from a policy of forward defense in association with allies to the concept of self reliance in the defense of Australia has had some of its most important effects in the support area," stated Dibb.³ Although no longer worried about transporting and supporting its forces outside of Australia, it now had to be done without allied help over a vast continent.

The war reserve stocks and the stockpiling of critical materials was last updated in 1963. The stalemate, in part, was caused by differing individual service policies and philosophies. A precise, comprehensive approach to planning for war reserves was required. Dobb reasoned that this approach should be based on credible low intensity conflicts of three and six month durations. Consideration must be accorded to increased training readiness, the remoteness and dispersion of the operating environment and realistic rates of effort and stock usage. Dobb cited the limited number of military targets likely to be encountered during a low intensity conflict, an important factor in calculating the number of missiles in the stockpile.

In a 1980 Memorandum of Understanding on logistic support, the United States acknowledges the importance to Australia of uninterrupted supply lines. With that Memorandum, and less extensive but similar agreements with Europe, along with Australia's unique strategic environment, Dobb concluded that there was no justification for large scale stockpiling.

The logistic support of the Australian Defense Force is concerned with provisioning clothing, rations, medical facilities, ammunition, transport, repair, maintenance of

equipment, and technical and scientific support. The justification of this costly and complex system rests in its potential to support military operations. Although there are less expensive ways of providing peacetime support such as lower inventories and centralized services, these would hinder sustained deployment and combat effectiveness.

One area which Dobb was unable to evaluate was logistic support. He found no way to assess the sustainability of the force in a low intensity conflict. The problems are in two distinct areas, each of which has a solution. The Australian Defense Force has no experience with low intensity conflict. There are no historical data. Dobb concluded that there is a need for a series of exercises in the north to find what would be needed and to uncover possible surprises.

The second problem is a self-inflicted wound. Dobb found no similarity between the accounting/supply methods of the three services. This, of course, made it extremely difficult (impossible for Dobb's task force) to assess the sustainability of the forces in a low intensity conflict. He recommended an immediate integration of the supply and support systems of all three services.

Australia's civil defense readiness can handle the low intensity conflicts on which Dobb based his strategy. The civil defense requirements are limited and fall into the same category for handling accidents and natural disasters. More substantial conflict would allow sufficient lead time to shore up civil defense with specialized skills. Dobb found no reason to invest in protective NBC measures for the Australian population, since nuclear war is a remote possibility.

He insisted that the civil infrastructure must be designed to support defense interests, and that this can be achieved without being subsidized by defense funding. He endorsed the use of private contractors, which would release military personnel for other activities. He advocated defense equipment manufactured in Australia, which would relieve technical manpower pressures in the services. Other areas where civil assets could be used are in telecommunications, construction and civil engineering, and rail, air, and sea transport. This interweaving of civil assets should be tested during military exercises in the north.

RESERVE FORCE

Dibb was tasked to evaluate the reserve forces. His strategy relies upon the availability of reserve forces to provide an expansion base and support military operations. Without the reserves, there are not enough forces to make the "strategy of denial" effective.

He weighed the contributions a viable reserve force can offer. Among them surge capacity, an expansion base for certain skills, an ability to protect key installations and settlements, especially in the north, and the provision of indepth local knowledge. He observed the liabilities associated with the reserve force, which include unavailability on short notice, reluctance of the politicians to call-up reserves, and their limited training levels. Dibb underscored that it would take at least six months after recall before an average reserve unit could be prepared for operational deployment.

The Dibb plan required an expansion base from which the Australian Defense Force could grow, should strategic circumstances dictate. The reserve force structure must therefore respond to the regional security environment. It must also be able to absorb initially all the credible contingencies, and surging to higher levels of activity.

The force also must be sensitive to technical manpower bottle necks, which would be difficult to expand rapidly.

Dibb highlighted the political problems associated with calling-up reserves. During a low intensity conflict, the recall of reserves could be construed as an escalatory measure, leading to an increase in tension. Yet, those strategic circumstances, which would indicate increasing tensions, identify the time when the talents of reservists supporting the regular force could be best used.

Dibb concluded that there is an urgent need for appropriate legislation authorizing a limited call-up of reserves during peace time, specifically for those low intensity conflicts which fall short of formal declarations of defense emergencies.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Dibb noted that his review was not tasked to suggest changes with cost savings in mind. He believed that, where possible, defense spending should be dictated by the strategic situation. However, there are competing demands for limited capital and defense needs are only one among many. Nevertheless, he applauded the intent of the five

year defense plans for financial planning and lamented that the political process has eroded the spending power of such plans by forcing impulsive (and short sighted) changes. He pointed out that, when the expectations of the approved FYDP are not matched by budget allocations, defense planning is disrupted, wasting managerial effort and resources and causing misunderstanding and tension between the civilian and service elements of the Defense Department. It is also frustrating to the general public who have a difficult time balancing the costs and the lack of an indentifiable threat.

Australia spends approximately three percent of its Gross Domestic Product on defense. This falls in the middle range of the percent spent by NATO countries, and three times that spent by Japan. Dibb reported that the amount in the FYDP was sufficient to support the changes recommended by his review, and demonstrated the review's feasibility and financial responsibility.

DIBB'S SUMMARY

Dibb ended his recommendations with a statement that the review did not uncover any major decisions or purchases which needed reversal. His statement is not quite true.

His recommendation that the F-111 force receive only a minimal update as opposed to the state-of-the-art update struck F-111 proponents as a major reversal. The Army also sensed a major shift in direction and emphasis. He delivered a broadside at the Navy, and found no need for an aircraft carrier and only a limited need for the high tech complex destroyer. He recommended all three services integrate their supply and support systems. That means either scraping two systems and adopting the remaining one or discarding all three and building a new one. Such a major shift in accounting methods deserves description as a major decision reversal.

Dibb digressed from his primary assignment by highlighting some important attitudes on the effective use of manpower, which consumes almost 40% of the defense budget. Encouraging further reductions in the Defence Department's civilian force, he urged wider use of contract civilians for support services such as logistics, catering and repair to free military personnel for military tasks. Alluded to the almost 25% of the officer corps driving desks in Canberra, he pointed out the imbalance between the number of military personnel in operational billets and headquarter jobs.

Dibb found that while Australia is among the most secure countries in the world, there are future uncertainties. However, those uncertainties are for assessment by the intelligence community and should not be used for planning.

He identified the need to keep the public informed and strongly recommended publishing a Defense White Paper.

Finally, Dibb admitted that the determination of an appropriate defense force is an exceedingly complex issue, not amenable to mathematical precision. The review recommendations sought to build on previous studies and, with some reordering of the force structure priorities, Australia would have the forces to defend itself into the 1990s.

THE CRITICS

The Dibb Review was not without its critics. In August 1986, at the Chief of Defence Force's Conference in Canberra, Ross Babbage and Desmond Ball presented their reviews of Dibb's work. Australia did not have an approved strategy, and a Defense White Paper would not be published until March 1987. There was still time for fine tuning

Dibb's strategic plan. Both Babbage and Ball were generally complimentary of the review, remarking it was long overdue and well done. However, they also felt that the review contained fatal flaws for which they had recommended solutions.

Babbage theorized that Dibb's "strategy of denial", as a strictly defensive concept, was inadequate to favorably end a low intensity conflict.⁴ Although the environment of northern Australia was advantageous to its defense, the vastness of the area might overstretch Dibb's defense force and give an advantage to an enemy. Babbage added that several regional countries already had the capability to wage a taxing, low intensity conflict. Predicting that the layered, interlocking defense would be more like a sieve than a barrier, he concluded that total reliance on this "strategy of denial" during a protracted low intensity conflict would exceed the capabilities of the Australian Defense Force, be difficult to sustain both in economic and social costs, and, most importantly, lacked the leverage necessary to end the conflict to Australia's advantage.⁵

He next objected to Dibb's categorization of the strike and interdiction forces as a defensive unit. Babbage stated that these forces were clearly offensive and risked

escalating the conflict. Most importantly, whether these forces were defined as offensive or defensive, he cited the inconclusive results of past strategic bombings both in Vietnam and during World War II, cautioning that strike and interdiction forces alone would not bring an adversary to end the conflict.⁶

Babbage proposed a solution to this problem by using flexible response options with strong potential for forcing an opponent to sue for peace quickly but which would not seriously risk escalation nor provide strong incentives for hostile major powers to rush to an opponent's assistance. The options he proposed are the disruption of internal lines of communication, mining, and supporting dissident elements. Adopting his strategy would require little revision to the Dobb's version. He recommended procuring an offensive mining capability and creating a second Special Air Service regiment.

I agree with Babbage's premise that a pure "strategy of denial" may not be sufficient to end a low intensity conflict, and with his observation that strategic bombing has inconclusive results. Yet, I am hard pressed to concur that mining is a non-offensive weapon which would not escalate the war and, combined with other means of leverage,

would be sufficient to end a low intensity conflict. Certainly, to mine a nation's territorial waters is an offensive and escalatory act of war which might draw international disapproval. Iran's use of mines is an example of exactly this situation and the ensuing international reaction.

At the same conference, Desmond Ball's criticisms of the Review followed those of Babbage. He found the Review lacking in three areas. First, it lacked counteroffensive operations. Second, the assumptions were flawed concerning the long warning times and long defense preparation times for high level contingencies. Last, he disagreed with some particulars of Dibb's choices of equipment requirements.⁷

His first disagreement joined with Babbage's criticism that the "strategy of denial" lacked leverage. Ball averred that, while a defensive posture can avert defeat, it is unlikely to secure a victory. However, he was keen on the F-111 strike capability. He urged that the F-111 receive the full modernization upgrade instead of the minimal upgrade proposed by Dibb, a view supported strongly by the RAAF.⁸ He made no mention of the escalatory potential of such strikes. An advocate of air power, Ball also disagreed

with Dibb's dismissal of the need for AEW aircraft and fixed wing close air support.

While Ball agreed that Australia is one of the most secure countries and faces no identifiable threat, he did not agree that there will be a sufficient warning to prepare for higher levels of conflict. He explained that many low level conflicts contain the seeds of rapid escalation. He observed that Hitler's rise to power and the resulting costly World War took place in just over six years.⁹ Astutely, Ball also noted that warning indicators are often ambiguous. He concluded that the expansion base of the Australian Defense Force should not depend on long warning times.

Ball was skeptical of Dibb's overestimate of the OTH radar effectiveness. He recalled that the OTH radar, Project Jindalee, has limitations and inadequacies. He recounted the constantly changing ionosphere causes frequent degradations and interruptions in the radar's operation. There is also a large skip zone. The radar cannot identify contacts or determine altitude.¹⁰ Finally, he said that this radar is vulnerable to a spectrum of electronic countermeasures. He concluded that the AEW aircraft are needed to compensate for the shortcomings of the OTH radar.

However, he recommended delaying procurement until testing on Project Jindalee was completed so that a comprehensive list of AEW capabilities could be compiled. He also recommended following the AEW aircraft procurements of the United Kingdom, Japan and Canada.

Ball maintained that even a low level conflict requires fixed wing close air support, and that few helicopter gunships proposed by Dibb were inadequate. He was also dissatisfied with air base defense and the lack of civil infrastructure and declared that more work was needed in these areas.

Desmond Ball had one final concern. He perceived a lack of public interest concerning the defense of Australia. There was no "critical mass" of interested people. He believed that the Australian Defense Force needs the illimitable asset of an informed and confident public.

GOVERNMENT ACTION

Disregarding the candid criticisms and recommendations of Ball and Babbage, the Minister for Defense, Kim C. Beazley, adopted and slightly embellished the entire Dibb's Review, and printed it as a White Paper under the title of

"The Defence of Australia 1987". This policy paper defined the master strategy for the defense of Australia, and reported that the shift in priorities would occur over the next ten to twenty years. It also expanded upon the role of the country in defense force support from the aspects of infrastructure, logistics, science and technology, and posited the expected relationship between defense and Australian industry. The paper redefined many terms and stated that the offensive capabilities of the self defense force would be used when appropriate.

The Dobb review was a major success. Beazley's policy paper crowed, "it drew together all the separate considerations of self-reliance over the last decade or more and proposed an achievable and cost effective approach to force structure planning. Its main recommendations for developing a self-reliant force structure form the basis of this Policy Information Paper and the Government's defence policy."¹¹

MY CRITICISMS

I have two principle criticisms of the Dobb Review. First, I am not convinced that the region surrounding

Australia is as benign and non threatening as described by Dobb. Second, there is an excessive reliance on the ability of their intelligence system to detect changes in the environment and provide sufficient time to tailor the Australian Defense Force as the situation dictates. I also find it incredible that the results of an independent review would be adopted unanimously by the government.

I have the advantage of three years hindsight from which to judge Dobb's regional strategic environment predictions. Fiji suffered two coups in 1987, and there is still racial tension between the Melanesians and the Indians. In November the same year, General Rabuka, leader of the two previous coups, let it be known that he was ready to lead yet another overthrow attempt. During spring of 1987, Australian police uncovered a Fijian arms smuggling network involving hundreds of Fijians in Australia. This ring was "exporting" arms of Soviet or East European origin to Fiji. An article in the 27 January 1989 National Review reported that there was a support network led by the pro-Soviet Socialist Party and the Trotskyist Socialist Party of Australia.

The Kanaks, the largest ethnic group in New Caledonia, have boycotted elections, chafed under the rule of the

French Republic, and clashed repeatedly and violently with local soldiers.¹² Vanuatu has courted both the Soviets and Libyans, threatened and snubbed France and Australia, and seen its economy deteriorate dangerously. Kiribati has chosen a similar economic and diplomatic course. Even closer to Australia, there have been pro-Soviet rumblings in Papua New Guinea. The border squabbles between PNG and Indonesia over Irian Jaya are chronic.

Indonesia, Australia's natural buffer to the north, remains a relatively closed authoritarian country unlike the other members of ASEAN. Thailand is establishing a closer military relationship with China. They have held military consultations, and Bangkok is purchasing from China 30 tanks, 800 armored personnel carriers, and an undisclosed but sizable number of antiaircraft guns. Thailand was also interested in the purchase of F-7 jet fighters and three submarines.¹³ With the purchase of imported high tech military hardware, the Thai military leaders are committing themselves to a long term relationship with China. This new relationship has particularly worried Indonesia which views China's sale of weapons to Thailand as an overt military presence.

Although Australia sustains a bilateral modified ANZUS treaty with New Zealand, the United States continues to distance itself from New Zealand over its declared status as a 'nuclear free' country. The United States has significantly reduced intelligence cooperation, restricted New Zealand's access to the U.S. Departments of State and Defense, and reduced the military training and education previously provided New Zealand. The price tag of New Zealand's political decision is a staggering \$100 million annually, and caused a decline in operational efficiency and lowered morale in the New Zealand' armed services.¹⁴ New Zealand has only recently begun to build its own satellite interception station at Waihopai.¹⁵

Interestingly, this Kiwi stance has not effected the favorable trade policy between the United States and New Zealand. Although New Zealand claims to be anti-nuclear but not anti-U.S., the United States will not soften its military support attitude towards New Zealand. It hopes that this will act as a deterrent to other U. S. allies who question the wisdom of permitting nuclear weapons in their countries, however temporary that may be.¹⁶ New Zealand has shown no inclination to reverse its decision and continues to sulk and protest. This year, peace activists in New Zealand demanded that the US Naval Observatory built on

South Island be dismantled.¹⁷ The leaders of the protest, Scientists Against Nuclear Arms and the Peace Movement Aotearoa, claimed that the data gathered at the observatory are used for missile targeting. More disturbing, despite the United State's harsh treatment of New Zealand, wide spread anti-nuclear sentiment prevails in the region as evidenced by the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (SPNFZ).¹⁸

To the west of Australia, India has engaged in a large military build up, particularly a buildup of naval forces. India now has two carrier task forces and is considering building a third.¹⁹ They have demonstrated the proficiency of their armed forces in Sri Lanka and recently in the Maldives. This force certainly exceeds that needed for coastal defense.

Australia too has been affected by the proposals of a persuasive Gorbachev. Canberra has received applications for up to 50 Soviet fishing boats to use Australian port facilities, and a request for landing rights for the Soviet Airline, Aeroflot.²⁰ The Labour government's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Senator Gareth Evans, has informed neighboring countries that the development of trade with Moscow will not be opposed.²¹ Although the National

Party leader, Ian Sinclair, attacked the new policy as 'recklessly indifferent to strategic and political realities of Australia's neighboring region', the seed was already planted.

Obviously, the region is not benign. There are 22 small island countries in the region, the majority of which are run by fragile, dependent governments. It is an extremely dynamic region exhibiting all the problems associated with developing third world nations. Without social, economic and political stability, military stability cannot exist.

My second criticism of the Dobb Review is closely connected to the political stability of the region. I believe that the environment can deteriorate with extraordinary speed, almost overnight. And, this change can occur without forewarning. Political turmoil in Fiji surprised the Australians.²² The intelligence community is not all-knowing and tends to hedge their bets.

The failures of the United States Intelligence system are well known. Eisenhower was informed of the potential of a Castro victory in Cuba long after time had elapsed to prevent that occurrence. Carter was shocked by the Iranian revolution which mortally wounded his presidency. Nixon

received poor estimates of Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile deployments and pointedly asked, "What the hell do those clowns do out there in Langley?"²³ For Australia, which relies heavily on U.S. intelligence, the message should be clear that intelligence estimates are just that—neither timely nor consistently accurate.

The combination of an unstable, rapidly deteriorating political environment, with easy access to high tech, yet easy to operate, weapons is a devastating characteristic of today's low intensity conflict. Terrorism is an easily exportable technology. Chemical warfare, the poor man's nuclear bomb, is within the reach of third world nations.²⁴ Iraq killed 5000 people in one day with gas. The combination of thiodiglycol and hydrochloric acid produces mustard gas. Yet both these chemicals have legitimate uses and are sold commercially and exported. Allies have been guilty of supplying both chemicals and technology to unstable governments to produce poison gas.

A high tech weapon in the hands of a low tech army can cause significant damage, and dramatically provide the tactical edge. In Afghanistan, the Stinger missile system proved to be the decisive factor, tilting the war in favor of the guerrillas.²⁵ The Mujaheddin, hiding in mountain

retreats (extremely rugged and remote areas) impervious to Soviet tank and artillery attacks, negated the Soviet's advantage with the arrival of this missile system in the spring of 1986. The best of its type, the Stinger is accurate, easy to use and devastated Soviet air assets. The Soviet's retreat (withdrawal) from Afghanistan in February 1989, is a testimony to the effect of such weapons. Stinger has also been credited with the recent turnaround in Angola. Unfortunately, these same weapons, an unknown number of which remain in the hands of the Mujaheddin, could easily find its way into the the eager hands of another guerrilla group.

Although I disagree with these two foundations of the Review, I agree with the force structure recommended by Dobb. Nevertheless, I believe that it important to recognize a weakness. The environment is not benign. The intelligence community is not infallible. There may not be time to change the force structure to meet new threats. The trade-offs must be identified and balanced. Although Dobb, perhaps intentionally, did not identify trade-offs and alternatives, he chose a prudent starting point from which to develop force structure.

One does not have to be suspicious or pessimistic to be troubled by the government's acceptance of the entire Dobb Review. The 1987 White Paper merely fleshed out and wordsmithed the Dobb product. Were the Dobb committee and the government in cahoots? Was Paul Dobb Beazley's lapdog?

Australia's use of an independent commission is not unique. President Reagan demonstrated the skillful use of the findings of independent commissions to support some of his controversial policies. There was the Kissinger Commission on Central America to support his policy to provide military aid; the Scowcroft Commission to convince Congress that the MX missile was the correct choice; and the Tower Commission, which found that members of the NSC staff had run amuck without the consent or knowledge of the President.

Following the same line of reasoning, a conclusion might be drawn (but not proven) that Dobb posed as a public relations front for a force restructuring which Defense Secretary Beazley already intended to implement. Adding weight to this conclusion is that Dobb restructured the force with no absolute changes in manpower requirements and (even more incredible) within budget! Nevertheless, the point is made only for possible historical interest.

LESSONS LEARNED

My purpose in examining the Dibb Review was to identify any lessons which could be used within the United States Department of Defense. Dibb created a new national strategy and defined the force structure needed to support that strategy. However, the creation of a plan is only the first step in strategic management. As in the old management axiom, "you plan your work then work your plan." Strategic management is a three step dance. You must have not only a realistic plan, but an organization capable of executing the plan and a means of updating the plan as the strategic environment changes.

From a strategic management viewpoint, the Dibb Review provided the initial ground work. He defined the goals and the plan. The second step was to implement that plan over a ten to twenty year span. Three years after the review, the restructuring of the force appears to be moving along at a steady pace. Following Dibb's recommendations, the center of gravity of the Australian Defense Force is shifting north. Air bases at RAAF Learmonth, RAAF Curtin and RAAF Tindal are operational leaving only the completion of Cape York to complete the ring. The 2nd Cavalry Regiment will move north in 1991 from Holsworthy in New South Wales to

Darwin, Northern Territory. The Northern Command (NORCOM) has been organized and located in Darwin²⁶. Patrol boats and other naval craft are homeported at Cairns and Darwin. The Air Force has completed two thirds of the F/A-18 purchase.²⁷ The Navy is building eight new frigates.

Construction began this year of the first Australian type 471 submarine with an expected launching scheduled in 1994. The five remaining boats will be launched during 1995-1999. The Air Force has ordered sixteen Harpoon simulators. The simulator was developed by the Defense Science and Technology Organization of the Australian Department of Defense. The arrival of 36 Army Blackhawk helicopters is expected soon.

Australia extended for ten more years the agreement under which the United States operates the Nurrungar satellite control ground station and the Pine Gap facility, where intelligence gathering satellites are operated.²⁸ This provides Canberra with access to this sophisticated electronic information gathering facility.²⁹ Australia has experienced a rapid growth in the defense industry and is faced with a lack of skilled workers and managers. Unfortunately, the most likely source of manpower is the military. However, Australia is considering loosening its

immigration laws and attempting to lure major defense and aerospace companies from Europe.

Not surprisingly, there have been slight snags in this restructuring caused primarily by the three roadblocks of insufficient funding, a shrinking labor force and manpower hemorrhages from each of the services. The strategy requires major long term capital investment and is absorbing almost one-third of the Australian defense budget. The approved budgets do not support such intense capital spending and several programs have been delayed and perhaps eventually may be cancelled.

According to Air Marshal David Evans, the budget problem is caused by two acts of the Australian government.³⁰ First, the defense budget has not been allocated the growth necessary to fund the capital equipment programs. Second, is the refusal to reduce the capital equipment programs at the expense of personnel programs. This caused a critical loss of skilled personnel (pilots primarily) over the last three years, and a damaging decline in exercises and training. Evans claims that it will take the RAAF ten to fifteen years to recover the expertise and skill levels lost during the last three years, and estimated that the Army and Navy have suffered similarly.

Determining if Australia is capable of taking the third step of refining and managing the plan is much harder to evaluate. Is Australia's force planning process continuous and capable of making adjustments for the changing environment? More importantly, is the structure in place adequate to effectively use these restructured forces during low intensity conflicts?

Those all-important questions lack complete answers, unless one can accept the results of war games as conclusive evidence or, perhaps even worse, accept the opinions of armchair strategists. However, those organizational problems which allegedly plague the United States' Department of Defense can also be found in Australia's. Attempts to smooth out the decisionmaking and management processes in accordance with the Dobb recommendations are still in progress.

Ross Babbage reports that the weaknesses in defense planning, which prompted the Minister for Defense to task Dobb to conduct an external review, still exist today, three years after the report.³¹ The Dobb Review concluded that the defense decisionmaking process is deficient and unsatisfactory. Obviously, lacking the capability to

internally formulate and update strategy and force structure severely handicaps Australia's Department of Defense.³²

Sample problems within the Australian Department of Defense are among the findings of the 1987 Australian Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade:³³

The structure of the defense establishment ensures that policy making proceeds by a process of confrontation and bargaining rather than mutual cooperation and collaboration between military and civilians.

Joint staffs are not in sufficiently strong position to lead and direct the development of operational requirements and military planning.

The separate planning and policy staffs of the single services are areas of potential duplication and conflict and make it difficult to promulgate a unified view. They also encourage institutional rigidity.

There is insufficient involvement of operational commanders and their staffs in the higher defense decisionmaking process.

The committee studied the United States' efforts to improve the joint process. It is safe to assume that the results in Australia are inconclusive and that there is still some fine

tuning to be done before valid lessons can be gleaned from its experience in the integration of their forces.

Evaluating its strategic management, Australia still has changes to make. The Dibb Review was a spectacular first step. While the plan is still in its infancy at age three, it is not too early to note that Australia's ability to execute, refine and manage that plan must grow and mature.

Although the differences between the regional responsibilities of Australia and the global responsibilities of the United States logically prevent any direct comparison of strategy, there is a basic lesson which can be drawn from Australia's experience with the Dibb Review. The United States needs to task an independent, nonpartisan commission with the development of a new national strategy.

First, we must agree that we need a new strategy. While there are many scholars who claim that the United States has not had a national strategy since the early 1960s, and further claim that we lacked the national resolve to adopt that strategy³⁴, I will have no difficulty in reaching a consensus agreement that, at the very least, our national strategy is overdue for review and revision. The National Security Council is conducting a review of U.S.

national security and defense policies. Chronic third world low intensity conflicts, the potential reduction in the Soviet threat, and budget pressures demand the reexamination of the U.S. worldwide strategic role. As Gene LaRocque, the controversial director of the Center for Defense Information, wrote, "...we simply have not had a coherent national military strategy against which we could adequately measure the adequacy of our force structure. Without a strategy, we have by default substituted the dollar as a measure of adequacy."³⁵

Assuming that there is a need to devise a new national strategy, why must it be done by an independent commission? The reason is elementary. Due to the incredible complexity of strategy formulation and the design and current posture of our political system, the product of any government body, although well intentioned, would be flawed by bipartisanship and self interests. The Joint Chiefs cannot agree with President Bush over the concept of "competitive strategies".³⁶ Representative John G. Rowland, a Republican and Connecticut's only voice on the powerful House Armed Services Committee, acknowledges that congressmen always fight for projects that generate money for their districts, whether they are needed or not. "Political pork is very important; it's reality. There isn't a congressman out

there who isn't fighting for his own contractors."³⁷ Former Secretary of Defense, Harold Brown, believes that interservice rivalries sap U.S. combat effectiveness by 10 to 15 percent, and other analysts assert that the problem could have catastrophic consequences the next time the military swings into action. Brown does not believe that this problem is caused by a lack of patriotism or good intentions, but rather the "belief of each service that it alone has figured out how to win the war."³⁸

Critics of an independent commission give two reasons why the selection of that method would not be a wise choice. First, they point with deadly accuracy to the failings of past independent commissions. I agree with their observation, having earlier outlined how these commissions have been used. The heralded Economic Commission failed to solve the budget dilemma, and produced not one but two opposing (partisan) reports. Second, critics point to the underwhelming conclusions of the Commission On Integrated Long-Term Strategy.³⁹ Once again I agree with their criticism. "Discriminate Deterence" was a method for thinking strategically, as opposed to the strategy and force structure found in the Dobb Review.

If an independent commission formulated a national strategy and force structure, I doubt that the findings of that commission would be accepted in its entirety as the Dibb Review was accepted in Australia. In a parliament, the ruling party controls the government from top to bottom making it possible to ram through a strategy and expect it to come out the approving end virtually intact. That could never happen in the United States. Our Founding Fathers intentionally divided the government into small pieces to prevent the ramrodding that occurs in a parliamentary system. Although critics call this "government by muddling", the system was designed to be difficult to ensure that the product was well conceived. Lacking some galvanizing situation such as a world war, changes in force structure will occur only in small increments.

Despite all the acknowledged shortcomings of an independent commission, it is the only reasonable choice. The findings of such a commission, composed of respected, pragmatic subject matter experts, would force discussion and decision. The United States needs to take that first step. As John Lehman said, "strategy's role is to give coherence and direction to the process of allocating money among competing types of ships, and aircraft and different accounts for spare parts, missile systems, defense planning,

and training of forces. It provides guidelines to aid us in allocating both resources and shortages."⁴⁰ That national strategic direction does not exist. Senator Albert Gore, Jr. (D-Tenn) said of the latest discussions of the MX/Midgetman controversy, "In a democracy, consensus itself is a strategic asset."⁴¹ The United States will never achieve a consensus while lacking the existence of a new national strategy. In today's strategic vacuum, an independent commission is the best mechanism for developing that strategy.

NOTES

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